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THE NATURE, DESIGN, AND GENERAL RULES, OF THE UNITED SOCIETIES IN LONDON, BRISTOL, RINGSWOOD, and NEWCASTLE upon TYNE.

THE NINTH EDITION.

BRISTOL:
Printed by W. PINE, in *Wine-Street*, 1769.

RULES, &c.

1. IN the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten perſons came to me in *London*, who appeared to be deeply convinced of ſin, and earneſtly groaning for redemption. They deſired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would ſpend ſome time with them in prayer, and adviſe them how to flee from the wrath to come; which they ſaw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely on *Thurſday*, in the Evening. To theſe, and as many more as deſired to join with them (for their number increaſed daily) I gave thoſe advices from time to time which I judged moſt needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting

with prayer ſuited to their ſeveral neceſſities.

2. This was the riſe of the UNITED SOCIETY, firſt in *London*, and then in other places. Such a ſociety is no other than "*a company of men* having the form and ſeeking the power *of godlineſs, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their ſalvation.*

3. That it may the more eaſily be diſcern'd, whether they are indeed working out their own ſalvation, each ſociety is divided into ſmaller companies, call'd claſſes, according to their reſpective places of abode. There are about twelve perſons in every claſs; one of whom is ſtiled *The Leader*. It is his buſineſs,

1. To ſee each perſon in his claſs, once a week at leaſt; in order

To enquire how their ſouls proſper;

To adviſe, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occaſion may require;

To receive what they are willing to give, toward the relief of the poor.

II. To

II. To meet the miniſter and the ſtewards of the ſociety once a week; in order

To inform the miniſter of any that are ſick, or of any that walk diſorderly, and will not be reproved.

To pay to the ſtewards what they have received of their ſeveral claſſes in the week preceding; And

To ſhew their account of what each perſon has contributed.

4. There is one only condition previouſly required in thoſe who deſire admiſſion into theſe ſocieties, *a deſire to flee from the wrath to come, to be ſaved from their ſins:* But, wherever this is really fixed in the ſoul, it will be ſhewn by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they ſhould continue to evidence their deſire of ſalvation,

Firſt, By doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind; eſpecially, that which is moſt generally practiſed. Such is

The taking the name of God in vain;

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or ſelling:

Drunkenneſs, *buying or ſelling ſpirituous liquors;* or *drinking them* (unleſs in caſes of extreme neceſſity:)

Fighting, quarreling, brawling; brother *going to law* with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing: the *uſing many words* in buying or ſelling:

The *buying or ſelling uncuſtomed goods:*

The *giving or taking things on uſury*: i. e. unlawful intereſt:

Uncharitable or *unprofitable* converſation; particularly ſpeaking evil of magiſtrates or of miniſters:

Doing to others as we would not they ſhould do unto us:

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God: As

The *putting on of gold and coſtly apparel:*

The *taking ſuch diverſions* as cannot be uſed in the name of the Lord Jeſus:

The *ſinging* thoſe *ſongs*, or *reading* thoſe *books*, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God:

Softneſs

Softneſs, and needleſs ſelf-indulgence:

Laying up treaſures upon earth:

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying them.

5. It is expected of all who continue in theſe ſocieties, that they ſhould continue to evidence their deſire of ſalvation;

Secondly, By doing good, by being in every kind, merciful after ther power, as they have opportunity, doing good of every poſſible ſort, and as far as is poſſible to all men:

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by cloathing the naked by viſiting or helping them that are ſick, or in priſon.

To their ſouls, by inſtructing, *reproving* or exhorting all we have any intercourſe with: trampling under foot that enthuſiaſtick doctrine of devils, that "we are not to do good, unleſs *our heart be free to it.*"

By doing good eſpecially to them that are of the houſhold of faith, or groaning ſo to be: employing them preferably

preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in buſineſs; and ſo much the more, becauſe the world will love its own, and them only.

By all poſſible *diligence and frugality*, that the goſpel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race that is ſet before them *denying themſelves, and taking up their croſs daily;* ſubmitting to bear the reproach of Chriſt, to be as the filth and off-ſcouring of the world; and looking that men ſhould *ſay all manner of evil of them falſely for the Lord's ſake.*

6. It is expected of all who deſire to continue in theſe ſocieties, that they ſhould continue to evidence their deſire of ſalvation;

Thirdly, By attending upon all the ordinances of God: Such are

The publick worſhip of God;

The miniſtry of the word, either read or expounded;

The ſupper of the Lord;

Family and private prayer;

Searching the ſcriptures; and

Faſting or abſtinence.

7. Theſe

7. Theſe are the General Rules of our Societies; all which we are taught of God to obſerve, even in his written word, the only rule, and the ſufficient rule both of our faith and practice. And all theſe we know his Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who obſerve them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known unto them who watch over that ſoul, as they that muſt give an account. We will admoniſh him of the error of his ways: We will bear with him for a ſeaſon. But then if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have deliver'd our own ſouls.

JOHN WESLEY,
CHARLES WESLEY.

May 1, 1764.

A

PRAYER,

For thoſe who are convinced of ſin.

O Moſt compaſſionate High Prieſt,
Full of all grace we know Thou art,
Faith puts its hand upon thy breaſt,
And feels beneath thy panting heart.

Thy panting heart for ſinners bleeds;
Thy mercies and compaſſions move;
Thy groaning ſpirit interceeds,
And yearn the bowels of thy love.

Hear then the pleading ſpirit's prayer,
(The ſpirit's will to Thee is known)
For all who now thy ſufferings ſhare,
And ſtill for full redemption groan.

Poor tempted ſouls, with tempeſts toſs'd,
And ſtrangers to a moment's peace;
Diſconſolate, afflicted, loſt,
Loſt in an howling wilderneſs.

Torn with an endleſs war within,
Vex'd with the fleſh and ſpirit's ſtrife,
And ſtruggling in the toils of ſin,
And agonizing into life.

O let

A PRAYER, *for thoſe*

O let the pris'ners mournful cries
As incenſe in thy ſight appear;
Their humble wailings pierce the ſkies,
If haply they may feel Thee near!

The captive exiles make their moans,
From ſin impatient to be free;
Call home, call home, thy baniſh'd ones
Lead captive their captivity!

Shew them the blood that bought their peace,
The anchor of their ſtedfaſt hope:
And bid their guilty terrors ceaſe,
And bring the ranſom'd pris'ners up.

Out of the deep regard their cries,
The fallen raiſe, the mourners chear:
O Sun of Righteouſneſs ariſe,
And ſcatter all their doubt and fear.

Pity the day of feeble things;
O gather ev'ry halting ſoul,
And drop ſalvation from thy wings,
And make the contrite ſinner whole.

Stand by them in the fiery hour,
Their feebleneſs of mind defend,
And in their weakneſs ſhew thy power,
And make them patient to the end.

O ſatisfy their ſoul in drought:
Give them thy ſaving health to ſee,
And let thy mercy find them out;
And let thy mercy reach to me.

Haſt Thou the work of grace begun,
And brought them to the birth in vain?
O let thy children ſee the ſun!
Let all their ſouls be born again!

Relieve

Relieve the ſoul whoſe croſs we bear,
For whom thy ſuff'ring members mourn;
Anſwer our faith's effectual prayer:
Bid ev'ry ſtraggling child be born.

Hark how thy turtle dove complains,
And ſee us weep for *Sion*'s woe!
Pity thy ſuffering people's pain;
Avenge us of our inbred foe.

Whom Thou haſt bound, O Lord expel,
And take his armour all away;
The man of ſin, the child of hell,
The devil in our nature ſlay.

Him and his works at once deſtroy,
The *Being* of all ſin eraſe,
And turn our mourning into joy,
And cloath us with the robes of praiſe.

Then when our ſuff'rings all are paſt,
O let us pure and perfect be,
And gain our calling's prize at laſt,
For ever ſanctified in Thee.